

**Amendment of the Claims**

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A pretreatment process for solid sedimentary iron ore lump feed material for a direct reduction processes to reduce the formation of fines, comprising:

storing solid lump feed material ~~in a stockpile for a predetermined time of at least one month~~ in an open atmosphere, therein providing time to release releasing internal stresses of the sedimentary lump ore;

reclaiming the solid lump feed material stored for at least one month; and

pre-drying the solid lump feed material to a temperature less than 200° C and to a water content less than about 0.5% by weight prior to charging the feed material to a gas-based direct reduction furnace.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein said pre-drying is accomplished in a feed storage bin by introduction of waste off-gases.

5. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 4, wherein the waste off-gas temperature is in excess of 300° C upon introduction into the feed storage bin.

6. (Original) A process according to claim 4, wherein said waste off-gases are removed from a reformer associated with the direct reduction process.

Claims 7 – 8 are cancelled.

9. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1 further comprising charging the pre-dried iron ore lump feed material into the furnace separately from any lime coated pellet feed material.

Claim 10 is cancelled